

BOROUGH OF  
**SAFFRON WALDEN**

IN THE  
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNTY OF ESSEX.

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THE  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
OF THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR

—1944—



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TO THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN  
BOROUGH COUNCIL.

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report for the year 1944

In accordance with the directions of the Minister of Health, only interim reports were made during the previous five years, and on grounds of national security certain statistics were omitted. But as the state of war had ceased to exist when this report was being prepared, it has been possible to discontinue these restrictions, and to include some comparative figures.

When dealing with small numbers, rates per thousand have less significance than the actual numbers on which they are calculated ; frequently they are misleading.

Probably the most reliable comparisons are made by viewing actual numbers obtained over a number of years, in relation to corresponding numbers in an equal number of previous years. In comparing statistics of the five year period to the end of 1944, with the five year period to the end of 1939, allowance should be made for the fact that the population figure was much less constant during the war years, and that the pre-war practice of transferring deaths from the area of temporary residence to that of usual residence was discontinued. Nevertheless, a comparative table such as the following is of interest.—

			5 year period to end 1939	5 year period to end 1944
Average estimated population	...	...	6632	7145
Total number of births (corrected for inward and outward transfers)...	...	...	338	492
Total number of illegitimate births	...	...	16	39
" " " still births	...	...	14	9
" " " deaths	...	...	427	505
" " " " of infants under 1 yr.			12	23
" " " " from Tuberculosis	...	...	9	9
" " " " Acute Pneumonia			15	30
" " " notifications of Diphtheria			9	4
" " " " " Scarlet Fever			67	113

If the health of the community was seriously affected during the difficult war years, no evidence of this can be deduced from any available statistics.

S. R. RICHARDSON,  
*Medical Officer of Health.*

## STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area : 7502 Acres.

Population (Registrar General's estimate of resident population: 1944) : 7019.

Number of inhabited houses (end of 1944) according to Rate  
Books: 1970,

Rateable value : £39,797.

Sum represented by a penny rate : £159.

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR (corrections being made for inward and outward transfers) :—

				Total.	Male.	Female.		
LIVE BIRTHS	{	Legitimate ...	...	113	67	46	{	Birth Rate per 1000
		Illegitimate ...	...	15	12	3		of the estimated
								population 18.2.
STILL BIRTHS...	...	...	...	4	2	2	{	Rate per 1000 total
								births (live and
								stillbirths) 30.3.
DEATHS...	...	...	...	91	47	44	{	Death Rate per 1000.
								of the estimated
								population 12.9.

DEATHS from puerperal causes :—

From puerperal sepsis, 0.

From other puerperal causes, 0.

Total, 0

DEATHS of Infants under one year of age	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Illegitimate } 0 \\ \text{Legitimate } 5 \end{array} \right\}$	Total 5.
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DEATH RATE of Infants under one year of age :—

All infants per 1000 live births, 39.

Legitimate infants per 1000 legitimate births, 44.2.

Illegitimate infants per 1000 illegitimate births, 0.

## DEATHS AT VARIOUS AGES :—

	No. in District	Outward Transfers	Inward Transfers	Those which apply to District
Under 1 year ...	10	6	1	5
1 and under 2 ...	0	0	0	0
2 „ „ 5 ...	1	0	0	1
5 „ „ 15 ...	1	1	1	1
15 „ „ 25 ...	7	6	0	1
25 „ „ 35 ...	3	3	3	3
35 „ „ 45 ...	11	8	0	3
45 „ „ 55 ...	11	7	2	6
55 „ „ 65 ...	15	6	1	10
65 „ „ 75 ...	33	10	1	24
75 „ over ...	61	25	1	37
Total ...	153	72	10	91

In the following table the Birth Rate, Death Rate, and Infant Mortality Rate are compared with the corresponding rates of previous four years in the District, and with the rates for the whole of England and Wales in 1944.

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	England & Wales.
Birth Rate .. ..	11·5	12·6	15·2	12·2	18·2	17·6
Death Rate .. ..	14·1	12·6	16·2	14·7	12·9	11·6
Infant Mortality .. ..	78·6	51·6	46·3	72·3	39	46

Deaths from Measles (all ages) ...	0
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages) ...	0
„ „ Diarrhoea, under two years ...	1
„ „ Cancer ...	15

There was no excessive mortality from any particular disease during the year.

## GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

### PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

*Medical Officer of Health*:—S. R. RICHARDSON,

B.A., M.D., D.P.H.

The Medical Officer is also Medical Officer of Health to the Saffron Walden Rural District, Medical Superintendent of the Isolation Hospital, and Assistant County Medical Officer in the two districts.

*Sanitary Inspector*:—H. J. BAXTER, A.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.

The Sanitary Inspector is also Housing Inspector and Meat Inspector for the district.

*Laboratory Facilities*.—BACTERIOLOGICAL LABORATORY SERVICE:—The Essex County Council's Scheme serves this district, specimens being sent to St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping. Samples of milk are examined by the Essex Institute of Agriculture, Writtle.

*Ambulance Facilities*.—When a general review of the County Ambulance Scheme was undertaken in the early months of the year, the position in this area was not very satisfactory. Two Ambulances were owned by the Local Authorities; one used for ordinary cases was included in the County Scheme, the other reserved for infectious diseases. Owing to marked increase in all types of ambulance work during the war years it became necessary to use both ambulances for all classes of patients.

In addition, a Gift Ambulance, loaned to the Women's Detachment of the British Red Cross Society, and used by them for the transport of Service cases, was also made available in emergencies.



The most serious problem, which did not arise until the latter part of the year, was the lack of a continuously manned telephone service. Previously, urgent calls for ambulances were received at A.R.P. Headquarters and communicated to the voluntary drivers, but this arrangement had become impossible.

*Nursing.*—Two District Nurse Midwives are provided by the Local Nursing Association, which is affiliated to the Essex County Nursing Association and receives a grant from the County Council, but its funds are raised mainly by voluntary local effort.

*Hospitals.*—Under the County Council Scheme for securing the co-ordination of Isolation Hospital accommodation in North West Essex, the Borough of Saffron Walden is grouped with six neighbouring Sanitary Districts.

Normally, any additional accommodation which may be required within the seven Sanitary Districts would be provided by all the Local Authorities acting together as a unit. But when war became imminent the Joint Board of the Saffron Walden Borough and Rural Districts considered the provision of additional accommodation an urgent necessity, as the existing accommodation of sixteen beds at the Saffron Walden Isolation Hospital was the minimum specified in the Scheme for the area normally served, and it had been realised that additional accommodation would be required in the event of any increase of the population in the area.

The Board therefore decided to proceed with the erecting of an emergency block to take sixteen beds. Subsequently, a grant was received from the Home Office to meet the expenses incurred, on the understanding that the sixteen beds should be held available for persons coming into the district under the Evacuation Scheme.

During the five years ending 31st December, 1944, 939 patients were admitted to the Isolation Hospital. Of these, 279 belonged to the area normally served by the hospital, 143 were evacuees, 118 were from neighbouring districts and 399 were service-patients.

During the previous five year period, the total number of admissions was 359, and 271 of the patients belonged to the Area.

The County Council is responsible for the treatment of Smallpox cases occurring in the Administrative County. The Smallpox Hospital is situated at Colchester.

## TREATMENT CENTRES AND CLINICS.

*Provided by the Local Authority :*

Diphtheria Immunisation Clinics, at the Central Hall, weekly on Fridays at 2.30 p.m. Additional Clinics by arrangement, at 69, High Street.

*Provided by the Essex County Council :*

Tuberculosis Dispensary, at the General Hospital, first and third Tuesdays in each month, at 2 p.m.

Maternity and Child Welfare, at the Central Hall, weekly on Fridays, at 2.30 p.m.

*School Clinics :*

Minor Ailments Clinics, at 69, High Street, weekly on Tuesdays, at 10 a.m.

Dental and Eye Clinics, at 69, High Street, by arrangement.

Orthopædic Clinics, at 69, High Street, on fourth Monday in each month, at 10 a.m.

Orthopædic Ascertainment Clinics, at the General Hospital, twice yearly.

Ante-Natal Clinics, at 69, High Street, on first and third Tuesdays in each month at 10 a.m. and quarterly on fifth Tuesday.

*Venereal Diseases :* Treatment is available at any of the principle London Hospitals and at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Colchester Hospitals. Notifications, under the Defence Regulation 33B, are dealt with by the County Medical Officer.



## SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

*Water.*—The following is a summary of the most recent analysis, in its natural state and after softening :—

	Before Softening	After Softening
Total Solids ... ..	39.0	39.0
Chlorine (in Chloridea) ... ..	1.8	1.8
Nitrogen (in Nitrates) ... ..	0.40	0.40
Nitrates ... ..	absent	absent
Hardness (Permanent)... ..	4.0	nil
Hardness (Temporary)... ..	26.5	22.5
Free Ammonia ... ..	nil	nil
Albuminoid Ammonia ... ..	nil	0.0004
Oxygen Absorbed (in 4 hrs. at 80 Deg. C)	0.005	0.010
Free Co <sub>2</sub> ... ..	3.2	3.2

The results show the water to be of the highest standard of organic and bacterial purity.

Before the outbreak of war, the Borough Engineer reported that the storage capacity represented only one day's supply, and pointed out that it would be impracticable to undertake a wider distribution of water in the Rural portion of the area, until a much greater storage capacity could be provided. He proposed that a new reservoir should be built with a capacity equal to five days' supply, and a new water tower constructed at a higher level.

This scheme was considered by the Council, but postponed for the period of the war.

*Drainage and Sewerage.*—During the war years, only urgent structural repairs were carried out at the Sewage Works. The Scheme for the supply of new works, capable of dealing with the sewage from certain neighbouring villages in the Rural District, which had been approved in principle by the two Councils, had reached the stage of the preparation of a detailed report with plans and estimates when war broke out, but final negotiations had not been completed.

*Closet Accommodation.*—The water-carriage system is now general in the Borough, but in some instances there is still insufficient space for adequate sanitary accommodation.

*Public Cleansing.*—Dust bins are required to be provided for all new houses. Weekly collections are carried out by the Corporation, a lorry belonging to the Council being used for the purpose.

*Baths.*—The installation of filtration plant and other extensive structural improvements, which were approved by the Council in 1938, were also postponed on the outbreak of war.

*Sanitary Inspection of the Area :—*The Sanitary Inspector presents the following Report on the Inspection of the area during the year :—

Total number of Inspections	...	...	...	...	1784
Nuisances or Defects found	...	...	...	...	903
Complaints received...	...	...	...	...	259
Informal (written) Notices	...	...	...	...	136
Statutory Notices served	...	...	...	...	3
Nuisances and Defects remedied	..	...	...	...	895
Houses Inspected	...	...	...	...	293
Houses Re-inspected	...	...	...	...	402
Premises disinfected...	...	...	...	...	65
Schools disinfected	...	...	...	...	0
Inspection of 2 Government Controlled Slaughter-houses					888
Inspections of Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	20
Inspections of Dairies and Cowsheds	...	...	...	...	36
Cases of overcrowding abated	...	...	...	...	1
Articles of Food destroyed as unsound	...	...	...	...	...see list
Samples of Water	...	...	...	...	1

*Unsound Food :*

Food in Tins, Jars, Bottles or Packets...	...	1862 Containers
Margarine	...	13 lbs.
Butter	...	5 lbs.
Sugar	...	28½ lbs.
Rolled Oats	...	113 lbs.
Beans	...	4 lbs.
Flour	...	18 lbs.
Cheese	...	5 lbs.
Oatmeal	...	2 lbs.
Semolina	...	14 lbs.
Bacon	...	49¾ lbs.
Soya Grit	...	100 lbs.
Biscuit Powder	...	3 cwt.
Rice	...	3 cwt., 2 qrs., 25 lbs.
Fish	...	333½ stone
Goteborg Sausages	...	102¼ lbs.

*Food returned to Vendors :*

Margarine	...	58 lbs.
Frozen Butter	...	36 lbs.

## INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

*Milk Supply.*—Routine Sampling work is carried out by the Essex County Council ; samples are obtained from farms licensed to produce Accredited Milk, and from those included in the Milk-in-Schools Scheme.

Under the Testing and Advisory Scheme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, all milk delivered from farms is sampled and tested, and all unsatisfactory cases are reported to the Local Authority whose Inspector accompanies the Executive Committee's Representative on his advisory visits to the farms in question.

While the responsibility of the Local Authority is not affected by either of these Schemes, they are of great assistance and enable the Sanitary Inspector to concentrate on the supervision of handling, processing and conveyance of milk.

There are 8 Cowsheds and 12 Purveyors of Milk in the district.

*Meat.*—There are two Government Controlled Slaughter-houses in the district. The number of Inspections made by the Inspector during the year, and including visits at the time of slaughter, was 888.

## CARCASSES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED.

	Cattle including Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number inspected ... ..	1054	397	1677	1047
All diseases except Tuberculosis whole carcasses condemned ...	1	1	18	27
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned ...	232	18	30	238
Percentage of the number in- spected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	21.1	4.7	2.2	25.3
<i>Tuberculosis only.</i>				
Whole carcasses condemned ...	19	2	0	7
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned ...	122	2	1	10
Percentage of the number in- spected affected with tuber- culosis ... ..	14.3	1.2	.005	1.6

## 1. — INSPECTION OF FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS AND WORKPLACES.

Including inspections made by the Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances

Premises (1)	Number of		
	Inspections (2)	Written Notices (3)	Occupiers prosecuted (4)
<b>Factories</b> ... .. (Including Factory Laundries)	11	2	—
<b>Workshops</b> ... .. (Including Workshop Laundries)	41	8	—
<b>Workplaces</b> ... .. (Other than Outworkers' premises)	35	6	—
<b>Total</b> ... ..	87	16	nil.

## 2.—DEFECTS FOUND IN FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS AND WORKPLACES.

Particulars	Number of Defects			Number of offences in respect to which Prosecutions were instituted.
	Found	Remedied	Referred to H.M. Inspector	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Nuisances under the Public Health Acts :—</i>				
Want of cleanliness ... ..	6	6	—	—
Want of Ventilation ... ..	0	0	—	—
Overcrowding ... ..	0	0	—	—
Want of drainage of floors ... ..	1	1	—	—
Other nuisances .. ...	3	3	—	—
Sanitary accommodation {	insufficient ... ..	2	1	—
	unsuitable or defective	3	3	—
	not separate for sexes	0	0	—
<i>Offences under the Factory and Workshop Acts :—</i>				
Illegal occupation of underground bakehouse (s. 101) ... ..	0	0	—	—
Other offences ... ..	0	0	—	—
(Excluding offences relating to outwork and offences under the Sections mentioned in the Schedule to the Ministry of Health (Factories and Workshops Transfer of Powers) Order, 1921).				
Total .. ...	15	14	nil.	nil.

## HOUSING.

The suspension of building and slum clearance during the war years, together with the drastic limitation of repair work, had a serious effect on the housing conditions in the Borough.

Good progress had been made in the years immediately preceeding the outbreak of war, but an important part of the programme, the provision of houses for overcrowded families, had to be postponed.

In the year 1943, the Ministry of Health urged all Local Authorities to review their housing needs and to formulate plans, concentrating on preliminary arrangements which would be necessary for a quick start on one year's building as soon as conditions should permit.

In their review, the Authorities were advised to include outstanding portions of the pre-war programme, to allow for changes attributable to the war, and otherwise to use as a rough guide the annual output of houses in the previous years ; the general rule being an average of double the pre-war rate.

The Council submitted a proposal to erect 200 houses in the first year after the end of the war, but the proposal did not receive the approval of the Ministry.

It was realised that a detailed survey could not be carried out in 1944, and that any estimate of overcrowding made then would not be a reliable guide for post-war years. No houses had been lost owing to war damage, but it was clear that a large number of cottages which had been on the border line before the war had deteriorated and become unfit for habitation. Although it was difficult to substantiate by actual figures the Council's claim to a relatively large building programme, the significant facts were that the population had increased, and the waiting list of applicants for council houses was over 300, apart from the pre-eminent claims of demobilized service men.

After some negotiation, the acquisition of land required for the housing programme was approved by the Ministry.

## HOUSING STATISTICS.

*Inspection of Dwelling-houses during the Year :—*

Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	293
Number of inspections made for the purpose	... ..	402
Number of dwelling houses (included in above) inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925	... ..	5.
Number of inspections made for the purpose "	... ..	8



Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ... .. 0

Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceeding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... 5

*Remedy of Defects without Service of Formal Notices :—*

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers ... .. 5

*Housing Act, 1936. Part IV.—Overcrowding :—*

Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year 1  
Number of persons concerned in such cases ... . 10

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES (OTHER THAN TUBERCULOSIS)  
during the year 1944.

Disease	Total Cases Notified	Cases admitted to Hospital
Scarlet Fever .. .. .	37	36
Measles .. .. .	8	2
Whooping Cough .. .	1	—
Cerebro-spinal Fever .. .. .	2	2
Erysipelas . . . . .	2	—
Puerperal Pyrexia .. .. .	1	—
Jaundice .. . . .	2	—

*Diphtheria Prophylaxis.*—The estimated proportions of children immunised against diphtheria, at the end of the year were :—

Children between 5 and 15 years ... 82%  
Children under 5 years ... .. 63%

TUBERCULOSIS.

*Notifications.*—Three cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified. The patients were two males, aged 39 and 50 years respectively and one female, aged 40 years.

The deaths of two males, aged 32 and 50 years respectively, from Pulmonary Tuberculosis, and one female, aged 39 from non-Pulmonary Tuberculosis, were registered.





